

**Decisions Regarding the Assessments of the
Health Care and the Medicine study programme groups
Tallinn Health Care College**

11/11/2016

The Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET decided to approve the report by the Assessment Committee and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Medicine study programme group in the first cycle of higher education in seven years, and of the Health Care study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at Tallinn Health Care College in seven years, with a secondary condition

On the basis of subsection 21¹ (2) of the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, subsection 10 (4) of the Universities Act, point 3.7.3 of the Statutes of the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher Education and VET (hereinafter referred to as 'EKKA') and point 41 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', authorised in point 3.7.1 of the above-mentioned EKKA Statutes; the Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education of EKKA (hereinafter referred to as 'the Council') affirms the following:

1. On 21.04.2015 Tallinn Health Care College and EKKA agreed upon a time frame to conduct the quality assessments of the study programme groups.
2. The Director of EKKA, by her order on 20.02.2016, approved the following membership of the quality assessment committee for the Health Care study programme group in the first and second cycles of higher education at Tartu Health Care College, Tallinn Health Care College and the University of Tartu; and the Medicine study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at Tallinn Health Care College (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'):

Carol Lynn Cox (Chair)	Professor Emeritus, School of Health Sciences, City University, London, United Kingdom; Chief Nurse and Clinical Manager of the Health and Hope Clinics, Pensacola, Florida, USA
Pia Ahonen	Head of Education and Research, Faculty of Health and Wellbeing, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland
Lars Bohlin	Professor Emeritus, Department of Pharmacognosy, University of Uppsala, Sweden

Lesley Dawson	Freelance Consultant in Healthcare Training and Education, United Kingdom
Gunta Krūmiņa	Professor, Head of Department of Optometry and Vision Science, Faculty of Physics and Mathematics, University of Latvia, Latvia
Ewen McColl	Director of Clinical Dentistry, Peninsula Dental School, Plymouth University, United Kingdom
Hannele Turunen	Professor, Head of Department of Nursing Science, University of Eastern Finland, Finland
Margus Viigimaa	Professor, Director of the Institute of Cardiovascular Medicine, Tallinn University of Technology; Head of the Centre of Cardiology, North Estonia Medical Centre, Estonia
Samin Sedghi Zadeh	Student; Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Turin, Italy

- Under the Health Care study programme group, Tallinn Health Care College submitted the following professional higher education programmes for evaluation:

Basic Nursing Education

Nursing Education Specialisation

Midwife

Health Promotion

Occupational Therapist

Optometrist

Under the Medicine study programme group, Tallinn Health Care College submitted the following professional higher education programmes for evaluation:

Assistant Pharmacist

Dental Technician

- Tallinn Health Care College submitted a self-evaluation report to the EKKA Bureau on 15.01.2016 and the assessment coordinator forwarded it to the Committee on 25.02.2016.
- An assessment visit was made to Tallinn Health Care College during 18–19.04.2016.
- The Committee sent its draft assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 28.06.2016, EKKA forwarded it to Tallinn Health Care College for its comments on 9.07.2016 and the College delivered its response on 26.08.2016.
- The Committee submitted its final assessment report to the EKKA Bureau on 14.09.2016. That assessment report is an integral part of the decision, and is available on the EKKA website.
- The Secretary of the Council forwarded the Committee's final assessment report along with the College's self-evaluation report to the Council members on 20.10.2016.
- The Council with 12 members present discussed these received documents in its session on 11.11.2016 and, based on the assessment report, decided to point out the following strengths,

areas for improvement, and recommendations regarding the Health Care and the Medicine study programme groups in the first cycle of higher education at Tallinn Health Care College.

Assessment at the Level of the Study Programme Group

Strengths

- 1) The teaching and learning environment is modern and attractive.
- 2) Simulation equipment and well-equipped laboratories offer excellent opportunities to develop practical skills.
- 3) Teaching and learning materials are of excellent quality, and the library offers a wide selection of modern textbooks and research literature.
- 4) Implementation of the programmes is supported by international cooperation in research.
- 5) Student counselling is effective.
- 6) Cooperation partners are satisfied with the content of the study programmes and the competence of graduates.
- 7) Very good internship placements with appropriate systems of supervision are guaranteed for students in all of these programmes.
- 8) Good quality IT solutions support the teaching and learning process (SIS, Moodle, free access to electronic databases).

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) For the sake of equal treatment of students and to provide them with high-quality feedback about their academic and clinical progress, external examiners should be involved in the student assessment process.
- 2) The study programmes should be reviewed and overlaps between courses reduced.
- 3) More attention should be given to replenishing teaching staff from among young prospects. The current promotion system should be reviewed and clearer career paths for the teaching staff created.
- 4) It must be ensured that the distribution of workloads among the teaching staff allows each of them to devote sufficient time to pursue their PhDs and to do research. There should be more staff with PhDs.
- 5) Given the needs of the Estonian labour market, the possibility of increasing the number of graduates from these higher education programmes should be investigated.
- 6) A larger number of international lecturers should be included in the teaching.
- 7) Due to the current structure of the study programmes, students find it difficult to participate in international mobility. The programmes should be modified so that their structure facilitates international student mobility and helps to increase the number of students participating in mobility.
- 8) Students should receive better explanations of the electronic feedback system and the importance of providing feedback.

Assessment of the Study Programme Level

BASIC NURSING EDUCATION; NURSING EDUCATION SPECIALISATION

Strengths

- 1) The study programmes are developed in cooperation with students, employers, other higher education institutions, alumni and other external partners. Alumni are integrated in the activities of the College.

- 2) Teaching staff are competent and utilise modern teaching methods and learning aids. Students consider the staff's teaching skills to be very good.
- 3) Teaching staff are engaged in professional self-development and in improvement of their qualifications for teaching.
- 4) Students are motivated and satisfied with the study programmes. Alumni are also satisfied with their qualifications for work.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) In order to better assess professional practical skills to be acquired by students, teaching staff should also be more involved in clinical practice.
- 2) Problem-based learning should be employed in teaching.
- 3) To ensure that all students are able to use the learning aids needed to acquire practical skills, it is advisable to reduce the numbers of students in study groups.
- 4) Module time tables should be reviewed so that the dates for submitting course papers and taking examinations are not overlapping.
- 5) The simulation lab equipment should be used when implementing in-service trainings and applied research projects.
- 6) Students should be involved in the activities of the College's research and development programme.
- 7) Part-time studies should be allowed to reduce student dropout rates.
- 8) In cooperation with partners, the use of NANDA (North American Nursing Diagnosis Association) terminology should be considered.

OPTOMETRIST

Strengths

- 1) The cooperation with optical companies is good. A number of internship supervisors from companies are also included in teaching and in the process of study programme development. Internships in companies are very well organised. Employers are satisfied with graduates.
- 2) Laboratories are equipped using modern technologies, especially the laboratory for eye structure evaluation and monitoring.
- 3) Working in small groups (1–2 staff members for 8 students) allows students to achieve good results in their practical skills.
- 4) The high participation rate of students giving feedback (more than 75%) helps to improve teaching methods and to solve problems in a timely manner.
- 5) Teaching staff of the specialisation courses are professional optometrists and opticians who are highly motivated and enthusiastic.
- 6) An excellent selection and admission process helps to select students who are motivated and will succeed academically, and this also helps to reduce dropout rates.
- 7) There is very good communication between the teaching staff and students.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The objectives of the study programme should be reviewed and reformulated in accordance with the definition of optometry by the World Council of Optometry. The current programme appears to have somewhat limited objectives. Learning outcomes in some subject areas should also be reviewed.

- 2) The content and structure of the study programme should be aligned with the requirements of ECOO European Diploma. [<http://www.ecoo.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/5-Learning-Outcomes-and-Syllabus.pdf>].
- 3) The College should seek ways for its teaching staff and alumni to publish more textbooks on optometry.
- 4) In cooperation with its alumni and the Estonian Association of Optometrists, the College should seek ways to further develop the Estonian vocabulary for optometry and to create an online dictionary. Requirements for internship supervisors should be clearly formulated.
- 5) It is advisable to meet with the internship providers annually to discuss best practices and to conduct training for internship supervisors.
- 6) International lecturers should be included in the implementation of the programme and Erasmus opportunities should be utilised for mobility of the local teaching staff.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Strengths

- 1) Due to the use of similar conceptual models, cooperation with other similar study programmes in Europe and elsewhere is possible within the framework of this study programme. The approval of the World Confederation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) gives the programme international credibility. There is good ongoing cooperation with other lecturers of occupational therapy in Europe through the European Network of Occupational Therapists in Higher Education (ENOTHE).
- 2) Changes have been made to the study programme based on employer feedback, for example, with regard to the duration of clinical internships and new modules.
- 3) There is a fierce competition for admission to this study programme.
- 4) The existing teaching laboratories and teaching aids enable students to practice the skills needed for clinical practice.
- 5) International professional research journals are made available to students.
- 6) The teaching process is student-centred, and teaching staff utilise various teaching methods that help to develop students' knowledge, professional skills, transferable competencies and generic skills.
- 7) Students are involved in projects of applied research led by the teaching staff.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) More employers and other partners should be involved in the teaching process.
- 2) Students and employers are of the opinion that the study programme should devote more time to hand therapy, splint making and advocacy skills.
- 3) In order to demonstrate all of the occupational therapy interventions, additional therapeutic tools should be acquired.
- 4) Employer and alumni input into the programme council should be increased.
- 5) More opportunities should be created for the teaching staff to pursue master's or doctoral degrees in their fields.
- 6) Considering the interests of the students, the organisation of studies should be made more flexible.

MIDWIFE

Strengths

- 1) Target groups are pleased with the modular structure of the study programme and the qualifications of the graduates. Development of the study programme reacts promptly to the changing needs of society.
- 2) International cooperation is in place within the framework of the study programme, including international mobility of both the teaching staff and students. International projects have also been launched. There is substantial collaboration with hospitals across Estonia.
- 3) Skills acquired upon completion of the programme also ensure the students with employment opportunities in other EU countries.
- 4) Teaching staff closely collaborate with each other and also involve stakeholders in order to link theoretical and practical skills as much as possible.
- 5) Practical training is well organised and meets the requirements of directives of the European Union. Students are well prepared for their internships.
- 6) Students are satisfied with the teaching process, learning environment, teaching staff and the student-centred approach to teaching.
- 7) A Quality Council, comprised of staff members and students, has been established to assess student feedback and review the programme.
- 7) An internal system for staff evaluation is in place, assessing the staff's teaching, research and development activities and their creative work.
- 8) A mentorship system is used to assist newly appointed teaching staff.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) In collaboration with the University of Tartu, it is advisable to develop an MSc programme in midwifery.
- 2) Results of the applied research carried out at the College should be published in international scientific journals.
- 3) It is advisable that the College compile a midwife's handbook in Estonian, or translate into Estonian a handbook published in English.
- 4) It is also advisable to develop dual specialisations, such as midwife and physiotherapist or midwife and social worker.
- 5) Students could be included more in research and development projects.

HEALTH PROMOTION

Strengths

- 1) The study programme has been accredited by the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) and meets the European standards for health promotion.
- 2) Cooperation ties with alumni are good.
- 3) Teaching staff in the speciality are engaged in master degree or doctoral studies.
- 4) Competition for student places is fierce.
- 5) International student mobility is good.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The study programme and its objectives should be clearly linked to the needs of the labour market and the proportion of factual knowledge in it should be reduced.
- 2) Broader communication with potential employers is needed.

- 3) More attention should be given to development of students' skills in communication, teamwork and professional language.
- 4) The duration of practical trainings should be reviewed. The need to extend the lengths of internships, expressed by employers, should be considered.
- 5) Additional resources are needed to recruit highly qualified teaching staff. There should be more teaching staff with doctoral degrees.
- 6) In collaboration with other chairs (e.g. Nursing), joint applied research projects should be developed. Research should be further developed and expanded.
- 7) The high dropout rate is a serious concern that needs to be addressed. For example, individual study plans could be implemented.
- 8) Research databases should be made more available to both teaching staff and students.

DENTAL TECHNICIAN

Strengths

- 1) Close cooperation ties with employers, alumni and other stakeholders (including with commercial laboratories) ensure that students have good opportunities for practical training and employment. The employment rate of graduates is 100%.
- 2) Internship opportunities are extensive and meaningful.
- 3) Teaching staff are enthusiastic, motivated and satisfied with the system of staff evaluation.
- 4) During the selection process, students' academic aptitude, language proficiency and manual dexterity are assessed. Students consider this process to be fair, and the process may also be a reason behind the low dropout rates.
- 5) The teaching staff provide students with comprehensive support.
- 6) Portfolios prepared by students exhibit their excellent competencies and enable them to also seek employment outside of Estonia.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The study programme should include elements of fixed prosthodontics at earlier stages of learning.
- 2) In addition to theoretical concepts of implants, the study programme should also offer students some practical experience in the laboratory.
- 3) It is advisable to meet annually with the owners of internship facilities to share best practices.
- 4) Cooperation between Dental Technician students and Dental students should be promoted.
- 5) Modern IT solutions should be utilised when assessing student learning.

ASSISTANT PHARMACIST

Strengths

- 1) Excellent opportunities exist for learning by simulation.
- 2) The possibility for students to choose a thesis instead of the final examination is a welcome enhancement.
- 3) Installation of state-of-the-art equipment for teaching modern analysis is a significant step forward.
- 4) Close contacts between the teaching staff and students are conducive to teaching and learning.
- 5) Feedback from teaching staff, students and employers is systematically used to improve the teaching process and learning materials.

- 6) Teaching staff are highly motivated. Educational training of the teaching staff has been increased.
- 7) The admission process of students is very well organised and enables the College to select highly motivated students. The dropout rate is low.

Areas for improvement and recommendations

- 1) The study programme should be updated to be comparable to international modern programmes. The proportion of social pharmacy and its related skills should be increased in the programme. Students believe that the pharmacology content should be increased and the interactions between drugs better explained.
 - 2) It is advisable that alongside applied research conducted for employers, teaching staff should also engage in fundamental research, in order to improve the quality of their publications and students' theses. Better cooperation opportunities for fundamental research with other universities should be created for the teaching staff.
 - 3) More textbooks in English should be used for teaching and learning.
 - 4) Since the need for pharmacists has increased in the labour market, the College should seek more possibilities to increase the number of students (e.g. additional funding).
 - 5) English proficiency by both the teaching staff and students should be improved.
 - 6) Current international working relationships are limited. The College should expand its existing cooperation network with high-quality colleges of pharmacy, to ensure that, inter alia, its students obtain broader experience through international mobility in Western Europe.
 - 7) Considering the interests of the students, the organisation of studies should be made more flexible.
- 10.** Point 41 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', establishes that the Quality Assessment Council shall approve an assessment report within three months after receipt of the report. The Council shall weigh the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations pointed out in the assessment report, and then shall decide whether to conduct the next quality assessment of that study programme group in seven years, or in less than seven years.
- 11.** The Council weighed the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations referred to in point 9 of this document and found that the study programmes, the teaching conducted under these programmes, and development activities regarding teaching and learning within the Medicine study programme group conform to the requirements.
- 12.** The Council weighed the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations referred to in point 9 of this document and found that the study programmes, the teaching conducted under these programmes, and development activities regarding teaching and learning within the Health Care study programme group conform to the requirements if the College eliminates the following shortcomings regarding the Health Promotion programme:
- Subsection 4 (2) of the Government of the Republic Regulation, 'Standard of Higher Education', prescribes that *when specialising in a main field of study, a student acquires the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the relevant study cycle which is a precondition for commencing work in a field or fields of study described in the study programme or continuing studies in the next cycle of higher education. According to subsection 8 (1) of the 'Standard of Higher Education', professional higher education studies are academic studies in the first cycle of higher education, during which a student acquires the competencies necessary for employment in a specific profession or for*

continuation of his or her studies in a master's degree programme. The current study programme does not consider the possibility of moving into employment after graduation. The programme and its objectives are not clearly linked to the needs of the labour market and are overly based on the passing on of factual knowledge.

- The study programme does not pay sufficient attention to the development of students' skills in communication, teamwork and professional language, which are necessary to attain the learning outcomes of professional higher education, as described in Appendix 1 of the 'Standard of Higher Education'. For example, according to point 2.1 of Annex 1 of the 'Standard of Higher Education', a student *must have command of the communicative skills and of the information and communication technologies needed for his or her work*, in order to be awarded a diploma of professional higher education.

13. According to clause 53 (1) 2) of the Administrative Procedure Act, *a secondary condition of an administrative act is an additional duty related to the principal regulation of the administrative act* and, according to clause 53 (1) 3), it is also *a supplementary condition for the creation of a right arising from the principal regulation of the administrative act*. Clauses 53 (2) 2) and 3) establish that *a secondary condition may be imposed on an administrative act if the administrative act cannot be issued without the secondary condition, or if issue of the administrative act must be resolved on the basis of an administrative right of discretion*. The Council found that, without a secondary condition, the next quality assessment of the study programme group should be conducted in less than seven years, and therefore, on the basis of points 41.1 and 42 of the document, 'Quality Assessment of Study Programme Groups in the First and Second Cycles of Higher Education', the Council

DECIDED

To approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Medicine study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at Tallinn Health Care College in seven years.

The decision was adopted by 12 votes in favour. Against 0.

To approve the assessment report and to conduct the next quality assessment of the Health Care study programme group in the first cycle of higher education at Tallinn Health Care College in seven years with the following secondary condition:

No later than 11.11.2017, Tallinn Health Care College shall submit an action plan and a progress report to the Council on eliminating the shortcomings referred to in point 12 of this document.

The decision was adopted by 12 votes in favour. Against 0.

14. In case Tallinn Health Care College does not comply with the secondary condition by the due date, the Council will repeal this assessment decision and set a new date for a quality assessment of the study programme group, or establish a new secondary condition.
15. The Council proposes that Tallinn Health Care College will submit an action plan to EKKA with regard to the areas for improvement and recommendations pointed out in the report no later than 11.11.2017.
16. A person who finds that his or her rights are violated or his or her freedoms are restricted by this decision may file a challenge with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding. A

judicial challenge to the decision may be submitted within 30 days after its delivery, filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure..

Tõnu Meidla
Chair of the Council

Hillar Bauman
Secretary of the Council